

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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PRISONERS OF SILENCE.

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CHAPTER VIII.

"TELL him to come up at once—at once, Adelaide! I don't understand it at all! See that he comes directly, if you please!"

The words were uttered by Dr. Vallotson from his bed; uttered with the utmost fussiness and self-importance, and with all the irritability of an invalid whose placidity has been disturbed at too early an hour. It was eight o'clock in the morning. Three minutes earlier the sound of a dog-cart stopping at the garden gate had elicited an interested and cogitative exclamation from Dr. Vallotson, who was not sufficiently recovered to leave his bed before the afternoon; almost before that ejaculation had passed his lips his wife had stepped brusquely to the window, and raised the blind. No word had come from her, however, until a tentative enquiry was uttered by her husband. Then she had announced briefly that the arrival was North Branston. The news, coupled with the fact that North Branston had not returned from Hatherleigh Grange by twelve o'clock on the previous night, immediately led Dr. Vallotson to the conclusion that his substitute had passed the night with his patient; and the idea had thrown him into a state of testy excitement, the outcome of which was the above peremptory summons to his partner.

Mrs. Vallotson was still standing by the window. She had dropped the blind, but she was standing with her eyes fixed as though she could still see out. She did not

move even when Dr. Vallotson finished speaking; a second or two passed, and he was beginning to fidget restlessly, when she turned and walked across the room. Eight o'clock was the breakfast hour in the Vallotson household, and she was ready to go downstairs. Though Dr. Vallotson could not see it, her lips moved as if she answered him; but no sound came. He took her departure for assent, and she left the room in silence. She went downstairs almost mechanically, and at the foot of the stairs she stopped abruptly. For a moment she stood there, one hand gripping the balusters, and then she went on into the dining-room. Constance was there, alone.

"Good morning, mother," the girl began. Then, as she came close to her mother, she stopped involuntarily. "I'm afraid you've had a bad night?" she asked.

Mrs. Vallotson kissed the soft round cheek presented to her hurriedly, barely touching it with her lips.

"No," she said, "nothing of the kind, child." Her voice was hoarse and rough, and she paused a moment as though its tones struck harshly even on her own ears. "Go and tell North that your father wants him at once," she said. "Tell him to go straight up."

And as Constance obeyed, her mother sat down, heavily and as if perforce, in the chair by which she stood at the head of the table.

Constance's inference as to her mother's night was by no means unnatural. Mrs. Vallotson's hard red colouring was blurred and patchy, her lips were white and cracked. Her eyes were hollow; they were surrounded by reddened circles and shaded by heavy eyelids such as only total want of sleep produces; and their keenness was dull and strained. She sat in

her place, staring straight before her without a movement of any kind, until the door opened to admit Constance. Then she stirred suddenly, and began to make the tea.

"North has been out all night, hasn't he?" said Constance, rather resentfully, as she seated herself. "He looks very tired, certainly, but he need not be so exceedingly taci'urn, I do think, mother!"

There was no answer; and Constance, glancing at her mother, decided that some annoyance or other connected with North lay at the bottom of her demeanour. She came to this conclusion without surprise and with some unconscious satisfaction. It seemed so entirely the right thing that a person who remained so oblivious of her superior qualities as did North, should be in the wrong in every direction. She digested her dignified reflections for a few moments in silence, and then she began to make conversation. Constance always made conversation; she considered silence a sign of intellectual poverty.

But on this occasion she found it almost impossible to get her conversation under way. As a rule, in her duologues with her mother she found herself encouraged—if not assisted—by a series of comments and responses which, even if she considered them not always worthy of her remarks, were a token of interest which she involuntarily respected. This morning such comments were altogether lacking. Breakfast went on, and still the mother and daughter were alone together. North did not appear, and by-and-by, in spite of Constance's efforts, silences began to occur; silences which made her feel strangely uncomfortable. It was in the midst of one of these silences that Mrs. Vallotson started suddenly to her feet.

"It is quite time your father had his breakfast," she said. "Give me his tray, Constance!"

Before she had finished speaking she had moved round the table, and with her one available hand was rapidly collecting the necessary items.

"Toast, Constance!" she said impatiently. "That's right! Now open the door for me! Be quick, child!"

"But won't you let me take it, mother? Or let me ring for Mary, as usual. You can't manage—"

A peremptory gesture from Mrs. Vallotson silenced the girl. Constance opened the door, and Mrs. Vallotson went out of the room.

Mrs. Vallotson went upstairs, but she

opened a door which led, not into the bedroom, but into the dressing-room adjoining it.

"I won't tolerate it, I tell you! It's a piece of confounded impertinence, such as only—one—a jackanapes could perpetrate! Once and for all, I will not tolerate it!"

The words, evidently the conclusion of a lengthy tirade, came to Mrs. Vallotson's ears through the opening that led into the bedroom, even as she closed the door softly behind her; the voice was Dr. Vallotson's, but it was so high and tremulous with uncontrollable passion as to be hardly recognisable. Mrs. Vallotson stood motionless, drawn back against the wall, so that her figure was invisible from the room beyond—into which she for her part could not see—holding her tray mechanically; the patches of colour in her face standing out against their livid background, her eyes strained and eager.

A moment's pause followed Dr. Vallotson's words; then North Branton's voice reached the dressing-room. It was hard with immovable self-control.

"The point at issue is not one that can be paltered with," he said. "The man's life is at stake. Treated on your original diagnosis the actual disease would run its course unhindered, and we should lose the case in twelve hours. I have told you what I have detected, and the treatment I intend to adopt."

Mrs. Vallotson's clutch upon the tray tightened; her bloodless lips moved slightly as though she tried to moisten them. But for those signs of life she might have been a marble statue of Attention rather than a woman.

"What you have detected!" broke out Dr. Vallotson's voice, almost choked with wrath. "What you chose to assert, sir—that's what it is! Anything to set yourself up above your elders! Anything to feed your own confounded arrogance and conceit! Anything——"

"Anything to procure myself the pleasure of an interview like this! If the case were not an exceedingly interesting one, I should have greatly preferred to let it go!"

There was a dangerous note of rising contempt in the young man's voice, and it seemed to touch Dr. Vallotson's wrath—founded, as it seemed, on wounded self-importance—into yet greater extremes.

"Interesting!" he ejaculated. "Interesting! Do you imagine for one moment, sir, that if things were as you assert them to be, you could pull the man through? Does

your conceit induce you to believe that you will succeed where better men than you fail ninety-nine times out of a hundred? I ask you, do you believe it?"

"I propose to try!"

The retort came sharp and short, ringing with defiance, strength, and resolution. Mrs. Vallotson moved suddenly. A wholly indescribable flash of expression leaped up in her eyes; she crossed the dressing-room with swift steps, and entered the bedroom.

Dr. Vallotson was lying—or rather almost sitting up—in bed, his face pink with passion, and his hands trembling. Facing him, but standing at some little distance, was North Branston. Not even the intense purpose of its set could soften the bitter lines which stood out about his mouth. He had been up all night with Sir William Karslake, and his eyes were haggard.

As Mrs. Vallotson entered, both men turned involuntarily towards her. A brief, conventional greeting came mechanically from North Branston, but she did not even glance in his direction. She passed him, and went up to her husband, who had received her with an inarticulate ejaculation which seemed to demand recognition for, and participation in, his indignation.

"It is time you had your breakfast, Robert," she said. "The things can't be kept hot all the morning."

She placed the tray by his side as she spoke, and he waved it away with a gesture as grandiloquent as his recumbent position would allow.

"I cannot take any breakfast, Adelaide," he said, with choking dignity. "I have been too seriously annoyed—I may say insulted. It may be long before I can recover myself."

"I am the offender, of course, Adelaide," said North Branston. The previous scene had evidently shaken his self-control, for his sardonic tones were rather reckless. "I have had the misfortune to differ materially from Dr. Vallotson on a professional matter, and to be obliged to tell him so—a less common occurrence! Don't keep any lunch for me; I shall have a busy day."

Mrs. Vallotson had not looked at him as he spoke; had never paused, indeed, in the arrangements she was making on Dr. Vallotson's breakfast tray. But, as he finished, she turned and faced him. She looked at him for an instant with an

accentuation of an expression which had lurked in her eyes more than once, as they rested on him, during the last few days;—as though she saw him from a vast distance which dwarfed into insignificance the ordinary antagonism of their relations.

"Sir William Karslake is very ill?" she said.

"Yes," answered North curtly. And he turned on his heel and left the room.

To all those members of his household who came in contact with Dr. Vallotson, and whose temper or spirits were capable of being affected by his mental condition, the day that followed was a day of trial. As far as could be judged, it seemed more than likely that his prophetic utterance would be justified, and that it would be long indeed before he recovered himself. Dr. Vallotson had received hard treatment at the hands of fate. To have to relinquish to North Branston a patient of such social standing as Sir William Karslake, was in itself a trial. But the result ensuing on that relinquishment was hardly to be borne. North Branston had told him briefly that his diagnosis of the case was mistaken; and that the man in whom he had detected no organic disease was lying at the point of death. The younger man had further given him a concise sketch of the treatment he proposed to adopt, without consultation with himself, and in direct opposition to his methods; and had proved impervious alike to denunciation and invective. Dr. Vallotson's self-love smarted and writhed in every nerve; impotent indignation stretched him on the rack.

Alone with his wife, his sufferings expressed themselves in an incessant recapitulation of the circumstances of the case, involving an anending vituperation of North. With other members of his household who could not be thus confided in, he relieved himself by such an exhibition of irritability and pompous self-assertion as made his very neighbourhood a terror to the servants, and sent his daughter out of his room twice in the course of the morning with wrinkled forehead, elevated chin, and temper which did slight credit to her philosophy.

But Constance, as the morning passed into afternoon, became vaguely conscious that the gloom which hung about the house; the gloom which was producing in her a state of irritable depression such as she had hardly ever known before; emanated, not from her father's condition, but from her mother. Mrs. Vallotson had gone about her household

duties as usual; she had ordered, supervised, and attended to Dr. Vallotson's comfort, precisely after her usual fashion. But it seemed to Constance that she had not uttered one unnecessary word. There was a concentration about her, an intense absorption, from which the girl held herself instinctively aloof.

The afternoon was not half over, and Constance's spirits and temper had reached a point much nearer to a state of collapse than she would have believed possible. It was wet and cold, and a constitutional being out of the question, Mrs. Vallotson had supplied her with some needlework; Mrs. Vallotson herself was reading aloud a book of travels in a mechanical, monotonous voice; and her husband, thus denied the relief of speech, was fidgeting irritably, when the front-door bell rang. Mrs. Vallotson read on unheeding, until a moment or two later the door was opened by a servant. The trio were sitting in Dr. Vallotson's study.

"Mr. Armitage is in the drawing-room, if you please, ma'am!"

"Mr. Armitage," echoed Dr. Vallotson testily. "Bryan Armitage! What the deuce does he want? These boys have too many holidays. Suppose you send him word you are engaged with me, my dear? Or let Constance go and amuse him! Yes, yes, that will be the best way! Let Constance go!"

Constance was already folding up her work.

"He won't stay long, mother," she said, with matter-of-fact composure. "I'll tell him you're busy."

Mrs. Vallotson signed assent, her eyes returning to her book, and Constance went out of the room.

Her head was held distinctly higher than usual as she went along the passage to the drawing-room, and her nose was aggressively tilted. She had by no means forgotten the circumstance under which she had last parted from Bryan Armitage. But for three days Constance had spoken to no one outside her own home circle, and the vivacity in her eyes seemed to suggest that with true philosophic tolerance she was prepared to find even an encounter with an offender better than no communion with her kind at all.

Bryan Armitage rose precipitately as she opened the door, and came eagerly towards her.

"How are you, Connie?" he said. "I hope I'm not an awful nuisance for calling,

but I—I wanted to know how Dr. Vallotson is?"

Constance shook hands with lofty dignity.

"He is better, thank you," she said. "My own impression is that if he would only try to control his temper he would be a great deal better."

This revelation of feeling—for such it was, in spite of the majestic deliberation with which it was uttered—seemed to encourage Bryan. He followed her example and sat down, saying cheerily:

"Oh, well, you know he's got the gout, and we all know what that means. I expect to have it some day myself; it's in the family."

He paused, and glanced at her with an enquiring flash in his blue eyes. Constance was sitting contemplating the fire with an air of the deepest and most intelligent interest; her small person was very erect, and her very consciousness of her visitor's presence seemed to be an act of distant politeness. The severity of her demeanour seemed to invite or even to demand apology, and in so doing to suggest a possible placability behind. Bryan Armitage had arrived at a fortunate moment.

"Dr. Vallotson's illness has kept you at home a great deal," he began; "you and Mrs. Vallotson. I've looked out for you everywhere, Connie."

"Yes!" she said. She spoke with the absent civility of one whose soul is filled with higher matters.

"I've wanted to see you, you know, awfully. That's really what I've come for to-day, Con. I say, I'll apologise anyhow you like! It's really beastly of me to have offended you; I'm no end cut up about it!"

Constance turned her head and regarded him as though he were a very small boy, and she the personification of the dignity and wisdom of age.

"You've not offended me!" she said. "You evidently don't understand my mind, Bryan! It is a sign of inferiority to be what you call 'offended.' But I must say that it has pained me much to see how exceedingly narrow you have allowed your intelligence to become, and how hopelessly out of date are your ideas."

Bryan crossed his legs and settled himself comfortably in his chair, resting his head so that his shrewd, twinkling eyes could watch her face.

"That's a bad look-out!" he said cheerfully. "My ideas about spheres, for

instance, I suppose you mean? I'm not chaffing," he added hastily, as Constance's chin lifted itself ominously, and a flush appeared upon her cheeks. "Upon my word I'm not, Connie. I really do want to get at what you mean."

She paused a moment, looking at him dubiously. Then apparently convinced by the sincerity of his eyes, into which a shade of genuine anxiety had crept, she said authoritatively:

"It's extremely simple! If you had kept in the least abreast of the times, you would know without being told. However, I will do my best to explain myself." She paused, a little contemplative frown wrinkling her forehead. She was evidently considering how the subject in hand could best be brought within the limits of his comprehension. "I suppose, Bryan," she began, "that even you are not so densely ignorant as not to know that to-day belongs to woman?"

The last word, as she pronounced it, was spelt with a capital letter of only slightly more colossal proportions than those of the first letter of the previous substantive. She paused for a reply, but only an inarticulate murmur came from Bryan Armitage. His face was an odd mixture of gravity and apprehension, just touched with an irrepressible sense of humour. Constance, whose question had been a mere matter of form admitting of no denial, continued. "Of course it follows," she said, "that with woman, as a matter of fact, rests the solution of all the problems of the day. Now, I dare say you may have heard—in fact, you must have done so, whether you know it or not, because it's in the air—that the great problem of the day is the social problem. Oh dear, no, Bryan, not socialism"—this in a tone of impatient disdain, in answer to a murmur from her listener. "Socialism is only part of the labour question. It's a mere phase. No, the social problem—the relations between the sexes, and all that they involve."

The words had come from her lips as calmly and as glibly as though they were a phrase of ordinary everyday life, and she looked at him as she spoke with the dogmatic, supercilious self-assurance of the clever schoolgirl who lays down the law as to the present condition of the perfect man. They brought Bryan Armitage up from his reclining attitude with a scarlet visage of horror, and an ejaculation which, though again inarticulate, was by no means murmured.

Constance looked at him with eyes of pitying disdain.

"You are dreadfully out of date, Bryan!" she said. "My dear boy, the time has come when these things must be faced boldly by men and women side by side. The time has come when men and women must work together for a new era."

"But you don't intend to talk like this—you don't mean, Connie—Good Heavens, you don't propose to be the inauguration of a new era in Alnchester?"

"Yes, I do!" returned Constance calmly; she had met the horrified incredulity of his incoherent speech with a smile. "By a new era, I mean an era of intelligent comprehension. Don't distress yourself, Bryan. Of course I shall do nothing violently or in a hurry—nothing that would startle or annoy my mother, for instance. I have a very great respect for my mother, though of course she belongs to the old order. She is one of those women who were brought up to think it improper to know anything. I shall just prepare the ground and feel my way, and do what is possible by the force of personal influence and example until I have become a power!"

"Oh, good Lord!" groaned Bryan, rumpling his hair with an agonised gesture. "Oh, Connie!"

"I have a plan which I mean to put in motion," she continued, "as soon as ever I am a little better known and have grown popular. And I think you may perhaps be useful to me, Bryan. I intend to establish a club for both sexes—a club where they can meet in a rational way, and see the literature of the day—of course we shall have to select it at first—and talk things over. I intend——"

But Constance's further intentions were not destined to verbal development at that particular moment. Her words were cut short by the opening of the door, and Bryan Armitage, with the bewildered dismay about him of a man who is only half awakened from a nightmare, stumbled to his feet as Mrs. Vallotson entered the room.

"How do you do?" he said. "I'm very sorry—I mean I'm delighted to hear that Dr. Vallotson is better. What delightful weather!"

The afternoon was closing in torrents of rain, but Mrs. Vallotson did not seem to notice anything confused about the young man's speech.

"He is much better, thank you," she

said. "Constance, ring the bell. He is coming in here to have tea."

"I'm no end sorry I can't stay!" said Bryan, with unabated confusion. "I really must go. Good-bye!"

Mrs. Vallotson made no effort to detain him.

He shook hands with Constance in a great hurry, and disappeared.

Whether the little interlude had quickened her sense of contrast, or whether the gloom that fell upon the house with his departure was really heavier than that which had preceded it, Constance did not ask herself. She only realised, as she poured out tea for her querulous father and her taciturn mother, that there was something in the atmosphere, metaphorically speaking, which was hardly to be endured. She had plenty of time to analyse that something—though analysis failed utterly to reduce it to its elements. Afternoon passed into evening, and still she and her parents were alone together. North did not come in.

Dinner-time arrived, and still he did not return.

The dinner was passed by Dr. Vallotson—who rejoined his family in the dining-room for the first time—in one long and vituperative colloquy with himself as to how and where the young man could possibly be occupied; a colloquy the ever-recurring burden of which was a surmise to the effect that North was engaged in "making a fool of himself" at Hatherleigh Grange, and that Sir William Karslake was fulfilling his—Dr. Vallotson's—prediction by dying incontinently in his doctor's hands. From the beginning of the meal to the end Mrs. Vallotson sat in absolute silence.

It was not until the trio had been re-established in the drawing-room for nearly half an hour, that the opening of the front-door was heard.

On a peremptory word from her father, Constance rose and went to the drawing-room door.

"North," she called, "father wants you."

She came back to her chair, and a moment later North Branstons stood in the doorway.

Dr. Vallotson wheeled round his chair with a movement which provoked from him a groan of pain.

"Where the dence have you been, sir?" he demanded angrily. "You've not been in since nine o'clock this morning!"

"So I am very well aware," said North drily. "I have just come from Hatherleigh."

"And how's your patient, may I ask, sir? Dead?"

"No," was the brief answer. "He is still alive!"

MILITARY AND OTHER MEDALS.

As a record of contemporary events, the striking of medals has gone rather out of fashion. Time was when every public celebration brought a crop of medals. Was it a great exhibition, a coronation, a victory, a popular struggle, a big fire or calamitous shipwreck, the medallist would find his account in it, and good citizens would purchase his productions, and take them home to their families. Had there been in those days an affair of a great statesman retiring from public life, his effigy would have circulated in medals throughout the land. The illustrated papers now answer the same purpose, and fugitive photographs have taken the place of the enduring medal. The change is not altogether to the advantage of posterity, anyhow, for there is nothing more perishable than paper and print, while

The medal, faithful to its charge of fame, Through climes and ages bears each form and name.

The medal seems to have taken its origin under the Roman Empire. The Greeks may now and then have struck commemorative coins; but the medal proper, as a piece of no fixed value, and designed to perpetuate the memory of some person or event, begins with the Emperors of Rome, whose features are thus preserved in a tolerably complete series down to the very fall of Constantinople. The art of engraving medals, which had fallen very low in the Byzantine period, came to a brilliant revival in Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and was also taken up and continued by a succession of French artists—the schools of Francis the First, Henry the Fourth, Louis the Fourteenth, and Napoleon being especially remarkable.

The great Louis was also a virtuoso in ancient coins and medals, and that he was well served by those who collected for him is evident from the following anecdote.

Vaillant, the King's antiquary, had made a voyage to Italy at the request of Colbert to collect medals and antiquities for the King's cabinet. He had obtained some valuable pieces, but on his return was captured by corsairs from Algiers, who carried off the vessel and her crew, and sold them to the best advantage. The Dey, however, conscious of the power of the

great French King, eventually released his officer, and restored his medals. Vaillant took passage again in a trading ship for Marseilles, and all went well till one rough day a Salee rover swooped down on the unlucky trader, and ordered her to bring to. These rovers owned no authority but that of their own chiefs, and were at war with all the rest of mankind; and their prisoners were certain to be stripped of everything of value they possessed. The antiquary, despairing of other means of saving his treasures, swallowed the most precious part of his collection, twenty gold pieces, in all weighing between five and six ounces. And then, before the pirates could come on board, the wind rose to a violent gale, the ships were separated, and after barely escaping shipwreck, the savant was safely landed on his native soil. As it happened, all ended well, and the medals, after all their perils, were safely deposited in the Royal cabinet.

But without going so far afield or running such risks in the pursuit of medals, there is no lack of interest in the varieties of our English productions, and especially of those connected with military and naval exploits. The English series begins practically with the reign of Henry the Eighth, when the wealth and taste of the English monarch attracted artists of all kinds to our shores. A fine silver medal shows a bust of the King, a gallant, soldier-like figure such as Holbein might have drawn; and a later one shows him scowling and rugged, "fidei defensor" as the wolf defends the flock, and "caput supremum" of holy Church. And a gloomy, terrible caput it is in its flat, jewelled bonnet; but a fine medal, adorned with the rose and portcullis as Tudor emblems, the fleur-de-lis for France, and the harp for Ireland. The reverse is occupied by an inscription in Greek and Hebrew, so that the world in general might be acquainted with our new departure in ecclesiastical government.

The next noticeable medal is a not uncommon one of the reign of Elizabeth, and perhaps the first instance of such a piece awarded as a naval or military distinction. It bears on the reverse the well-known emblem of the "Ark in Flood," and seems to have been awarded to naval commanders, before and at the time of the Spanish Armada. But the fate of the Spanish fleet was the occasion of many commemorative medals with gratulatory or pious inscriptions such as "It came, it saw, it fled," "He blew with his wind and they were scattered."

It was a custom also with servants of the Queen to carry her effigy in the form of a medal, worn either round the neck or sometimes in the hat. In the latter case it might be taken as a challenge to Spaniard or leaguer to "take it out of you" if he could.

A medal struck on the accession of James the First is interesting for the inscription, which styles him Emperor or Emperor of the whole isle of Britain, as well as King of France and Ireland. As might be expected, Gunpowder Plot is "not forgot" in the medallie record. But it was the Civil War between Charles the First and the Parliament that first brought the medal into notice as distinctly a military decoration. Charles himself, in 1643, ordered a medal to be struck, as a reward for those fighting for him who had ventured on "forlorn hopes." At the battle of Edgehill one Robert Walsh, having distinguished himself by rescuing the standard of the King's own regiment from the enemy, was knighted and rewarded with a gold medal, "to be worn on the breast." And as this perhaps is the last instance of a knighthood bestowed for personal bravery, so it is also the first of a medal worn in the manner now so familiar to our soldiers.

On the Parliamentary side, the crowning victory of Naseby was commemorated by a medal of silver gilt, with a ring for suspension, bearing the head of Fairfax, the General-in-Chief, the famous "black Tom" of the Civil Wars, whose profile is hardly inferior in ugliness to that of the "Re galantuomo" of modern times. This medal was probably designed only for superior officers. But after the "crowning mercy" of Dunbar the Parliament ordered a medal to be struck, and awarded to every man present at the fight. This is a fine piece, and should take the first rank in every collection of English war medals—for, as it was the first issued to soldiers generally, so it is the highest in artistic merit.

A fine medal, to be worn as a badge, is that commemorating the naval victory over the Dutch in 1653, ending in the death of the gallant Dutch admiral, Van Tromp, who but the year before had hoisted a broom at the masthead, as a sign that he would sweep the English from the seas. For this medal Parliament voted two thousand pounds, but it was awarded only to officers. But as in the course of one of the actions Blake's flagship, the "Triumph," took fire, and was deserted by a portion of her crew, those

who stuck to the ship, subdued the fire, and brought her out of action, were rewarded with a special medal—every man and boy—known as the "Triumph." The reverse shows a naval battle and the obverse a very happy and appropriate design, in which the badges of the three kingdoms are seen hanging upon an anchor, the cable of which is twined about the whole.

The Restoration brought in improved mechanical methods, which facilitated the production of medals as well as of coins. Previously the best pieces had been modelled in wax and cast, the impressions afterwards being touched up by the artist. Now it became possible to strike medals in high relief from steel dies, and the medallist, whose art had formerly been allied to sculpture, now ranks with the engraver. There are good naval medals of this period, in which the Duke of York figures as the conqueror of the Dutch, the reverse of which shows a fleet of fine wall-sided old warships, the anchor-flag of the Lord High Admiral flying at the peak of the nearest.

The next naval medal on our list commemorates the victory of La Hogue, 1692, a sea-fight which the exiled King James is said to have witnessed from the heights of the rugged cape on the Norman coast. The medal was struck by the order of his daughter, Queen Mary, who thus commemorated the destruction of her father's hopes. The military medal struck in honour of the victory of the Boyne, 1690, shows King William the Third on horseback, fording the river and leading on his troops. In Anna's wars, the victories of Marlborough are singularly barren of medals; and Pope's verses, "occasioned by Mr. Addison's dialogue on medals," seem to emphasize the deficiency:

Oh, when shall Britain, conscious of her claim,
Stand emulous of Greek and Roman fame,
In living medals see her wars enroll'd,
And vanquished realms supply recording gold?

In the latter couplet the poet, with prophetic finger, points to the soldiers' war medals of the future, and is not responsible for the delay in their issue; but they certainly hung fire a long time.

A Dettingen medal, indeed, shows peppy but valiant little George in feathered hat showing his grenadiers the way—and records the last appearance of an English monarch on the field of battle. There are also some interesting Jacobite medals of the period, James the Third and Queen

Clementina on one, the latter a charming head, of which the features are reproduced in her son, bonny Prince Charlie, whose effigy appears on a medal of 1745, with Britannia on the reverse, looking out for the ships that are bringing him to claim his own again.

The next is a war medal of 1758, recording Clive's victory at Plassy, with Victory seated on an elephant, and on the other side Clive bestowing a sceptre on a typical Hindoo—not taking it away, as might naturally be supposed. From this period Indian war medals are for a long time the only records of the victories of the British arms, and these distributed only to native regiments, the Royal troops which frequently bore the brunt of the battle being left without. Of these there is an interesting series, beginning with the Mysore and Mahratta Wars down to a Burmese War medal of 1826. The earlier of these do not acknowledge "Anno Domini" at all, but date from the Hegira, and the inscriptions are in Persian. They were worn by the good old Sepoys, attached to the neck by a yellow cord. Even the native West Indian troops got medals for the Carib Wars of 1773 and 1795. But the British red-coat got nothing at all.

Jack Tar was rather more thought of. Not, indeed, by the Government. Howe's victory of the first of June, 1794, brought gold medals to Admirals and Captains, worn by a "white and blue ribbon from the third to the fourth button-hole." But there was nothing at all for the sailors in general. And when Nelson and the Nile came along, it was not by Royal favour but by the good-will of one Mr. Davison, Lord Nelson's prize agent, that leave was obtained to issue medals to every officer and man engaged. The Trafalgar medal was presented by Boulton, of Soho.

It may be noted, however, that medals for individual acts of bravery had long been customarily bestowed in the navy. One, mentioned by Pepys as "the King for the Fyre ships," seems to have been reserved for those hardy seamen who ran fireships among a hostile fleet, and there is a warrant extant to Sir Isaac Newton, as Master of the Mint, directing the issue of medals and gold chains for the master and boatswain of the "Torbay" which caught fire when the Spanish treasure fleet was sunk in Vigo Bay, 1702. The last example is one to Captain Woolridge, for burning French warships in 1809—all, like the "Triumph" medal, connected with fire, and suggesting whether in our days some special dis-

inction should not be reserved for firemen and stokers, who run the most fearful risks of any, both in peace and war.

And now, coming to the great European wars of the Revolutionary period, we might expect a great crop of medals for our brave soldiers. But no, there are gold medals for superior officers, but for the die-hards of the Peninsular War, who often, by sheer hard fighting, redeemed the blunders of their commanders, absolutely nothing. As for the Generals, Wellington complained that they were too thickly hung with medals. There is a splendid gold medal for Maida, the very finest of all our military medals, of which only seventeen were issued. Talavera was acknowledged in gold medals to commanding officers. And Wellington suggests that only one medal should be issued to an officer, and that future actions should be engraved upon it. When four actions had been scored, the medal should be replaced by a cross to be worn at the button-hole; decorations worn round the neck are "awkward to ride in," says the matter-of-fact commander. Frederick of York carried out the suggestion with a characteristic difference. The gold cross—Maltese, with lion statant in the centre, and suspended by a gold laurel wreath—was issued to be worn by General officers round the neck; others at the button-hole.

It is literally true that from Dunbar to Waterloo no "soldiers'" medal was issued. But the latter great battle did bring a medal to all concerned—a respectable piece designed by Pistrucci, with the head of the Prince Regent on one side, and on the other a winged figure of Victory seated. It was not till the present reign, when the century was half over and the old Peninsular heroes were getting scarce, that the survivors got their medal. This is but a poor affair in itself, a variety of the Victorian half-crown as to its obverse, and on the reverse a weak representation of the old Duke kneeling to receive a laurel crown from Her Majesty. Although generally known as the Peninsular medal, it is in reality a general service medal for actions fought during the great war. Each separate action is recorded on a bar or clasp affixed to the suspending ribbon of crimson with dark blue edge, and there are twenty-seven of these bars in all, some for actions as little known as Châteauguay in 1812, and Chrystler's Farm in 1813. Two medals were issued with as many as fifteen bars, but seven or eight is a good score, and if representing such actions

or sieges as Basaco, Fuentes d'Onor, Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz, Salamanca, Vittoria, Pyrenees, leave little to be desired in the way of honour.

The navy, also, had its medal, like the "Peninsular" one, only with Britannia on a sea-horse as reverse, and for this there were two hundred bars for as many gallant actions, the highest score not recorded. Soon after was issued the general Indian medal for twenty-one actions fought between 1799 and 1826.

Then there is a Kaffir medal for wars of 1834 to 1853, with design of the British lion taking a drink under a bush; and a China War medal of 1842, which is the first to bear the head of Victoria. The Crimean medal of 1854 is well known, the Bal-clava clasp being most prized. The Indian Mutiny has its special medal, with five bars, that for Lucknow valued most. Some little wars in New Zealand in 1845-7, and again in 1860 and 1866, are represented by a special medal, while more recent wars in South Africa are signalised by the old Kaffir emblem. The medal for the Abyssinian War is of novel design, attributed to Princess Louise of Lorne; and an Ashantee medal of 1874 bears a design by E. J. Poynter, R.A. But the art of the painter and the medallist are very wide apart. The Afghan War of 1878-80 has its appropriate record, with a column on the march represented on the reverse; but Roberts's famous march has its own peculiar distinction—an effective star of five points, and the inscription, simple but sufficient: "Kabul—Kandahar."

The last Egyptian War of 1882 shows the familiar half-crown type, with the "Sphinx" on the reverse; and the subsequent campaigns in the Soudan and up the Nile are represented by bars over the same medal, nine in all. Riel's rebellion of 1885, in Canada, is represented by a medal with a bar for Saskatchewan.

Various Indian wars not otherwise specified are commemorated by bars over a general Indian Service medal, first issued in 1854, while the earlier Indian battles, 1799-1826, were first tardily recognised by a medal in 1851.

As well as the medal awarded to all concerned in a campaign, there are special medals even more prized, as they carry with them a claim for some gratification or annual allowance—that is, to the original possessors. There is the "Meritorious Service" medal, instituted in 1845; also a "Distinguished Conduct," for soldiers, from 1854; and a "Conspicuous Gallantry," for

the navy, instituted in 1855. The long service medal for both services dates from 1830 and 1831.

Most prized of all is the Victoria Cross, instituted on the twenty-ninth of June, 1856, a distinction open to all, from the drummer-boy to the General, and valued above any stars, crosses, or ribbons, of however exalted orders. A specimen is highly valued by collectors, for it rarely comes into the market, but forged examples are not uncommon.

To bring the list up to date, we must mention the badge granted to Volunteer officers of a certain length of service, and the as yet unissued decoration to be awarded to the rank and file. The Volunteers of the early part of the century were often presented with medals on disbandment, either by commanding officers or by grateful fellow-citizens; and there are also in existence many regimental medals, issued by commanding officers in recognition of merit or gallantry, dating before the issue of war medals had been officially established. So that altogether the field for the collector of war medals of all kinds is immense, and he is never likely to complain of having no more worlds to conquer.

MEMORIES OF A CHESHIRE MOOR.

WITHIN a few miles of Cottonopolis the forward movement of civilisation has just destroyed what was perhaps one of the most interesting bits of Cheshire—Carrington Moss. Hundreds, nay, I may safely say thousands, of people living within a radius of a few miles hardly knew of its existence, and certainly did not consider it worth a visit. To us as schoolboys it was a paradise; and the dread of the keeper's stick, and an occasional drop into a bog-hole, perhaps only made us more anxious to visit it on every possible occasion.

Here, little more than half-a-dozen miles from Manchester, the red grouse flourished; a well-stocked grouse moor within a walk of that great city and half a million souls.

How free we always felt there! the soft oozy turf shaking under our feet as we raced after the heath-moths or meadow browns. Nature seemed so unconstrained; we could imagine we were back in the Middle Ages, before the Cotton Kings had begun their reign, and when our great cities were yet in their infancy.

A merciful accident had carried the railway through a cutting at the edge of the

Moss, so that nothing could be seen but the smoke of passing trains, and the scarcity of houses in sight detracted from the idea of any considerable population.

Up sprang the grouse at our feet with a whirl that made us jump, and our guilty consciences revert to keepers. Away went her mate after her, dropping a hundred yards away in the heather, giving us his warning cry of "go back, go back, go back." But not if we knew it!

How many of those who knock the grouse over from behind the butts, or who smack their lips over him at three-and-six the brace, fully appreciate this sturdy fellow? How many know that he is our only exclusively British bird? There are no red grouse outside our tight little island. He is a true Briton; as his scientific name, *Scoticus*, denotes.

And the egg—in the cabinet—it is a beautiful and very conspicuous object, with its rich red-brown mottles and markings; and the casual observer points it out, and says: "That's a very pretty egg. What is it?" "A red grouse," you answer. "Oh! it looks red," he or she remarks, and passes on to another. But why is it red? Why those lovely markings? Had the mother grouse any idea of art? Did she think some one would come and take her egg to display her genius to posterity? If you had been with us as we turned to the spot from which she sprang up, you would soon understand the reason of those markings.

Beauty is not the object; it is protection, protective colouring. If you are not careful it is easy to tread on the nest without noticing these seemingly brilliant eggs among the heather and brown turf.

Swish! Away went the hare, dodging in and out of the clumps of heather, and throwing up a shower of spray behind her as she ran over the wet ground. Her form was close by in the top of a dry clump of heath, still warm where the pressure of her body had almost worn a mould of her crouching shape. A little bird fluttered in front of us with, apparently, a broken wing. Away it struggled, chirping plaintively, now tripping on its drooping wing, now turning a somersault in its terrified hurry. We stood and watched it; we had seen that performance before, and were not to be taken in. The little bird stopped, finding it "no go," and stood anxiously tweeting on a sprig of heather. It was all a farce to lure us from the nest, artfully concealed under the cotton-grass; and the meadow

pipit's eggs, as sombre in colour as the bird herself, harmonised wonderfully with the surroundings.

Far above us the skylark was singing: and, gazing upwards, we watched the little speck in the azure that was filling all the country round with its glad notes. Lower and lower it came—circling round, still singing, till suddenly a suicidal mania seemed to seize it, and half shutting its wings it dropped like a stone towards the earth; but Baldwin's parachute could not have checked its flight as easily as the suddenly outspread wings, only a few feet from the ground, and it alighted like a feather. In winter they become more sociable, and those that remain with us join together in flocks, and harry the fields in search of a livelihood. It is then that they are snared and shot to be eaten as dainties. It is amusing to notice the variety of small birds that are hung up in the poulterers' shops to be sold as larks; to wit, starlings, linnets, and, oftener still, sparrows.

A little yellow-billed bird used to inhabit the Moss, but I fear it has gone with the grouse, for the twite, or mountain linnet, can no longer find the downy cotton-grass to line its beautiful little nest. The twite, curlew, and red grouse were regular moorland birds, and Manchester refuse has driven them away to more congenial haunts; for alas, the Moss is now little more than a huge sewage farm for the city.

The curlew used to visit the moor; I well remember flushing one in the very middle of the breeding season; its plaintive whistle seeming out of place without the accompaniment of the surf or the low moan of the tide on the mud-flats. What a stately bird the curlew looks as she stalks about the moor, where it is wettest and most treacherous, her head erect and long curved bill stretching out in front! She reminds one of the pictures of the sacred ibis worshipped by the Egyptians. She is dreadfully shy, and no amount of caution will enable you to surprise her on the nest. Her mate on the slightest sign of danger flies off with a very decisive cry of alarm, and she runs for some distance before taking wing, thus hiding the exact locality of the nest, trusting to the mottled eggs or the protective down of the youngsters to keep them in safety.

There were a few stunted birch bushes on the Moss, and one of these was generally ornamented with two or three dead hawks or owls. Close by a pole about six feet high was stuck in the ground; and on the

top an unbaited tooth trap, attached to the pole by a chain, kept its hungry jaws ready for all comers. This was a hawk trap. The poor kestrel or sparrow-hawk, weary of beating to and fro, would alight on this innocent-looking post for a rest, and when the keeper came his rounds, a blow on the head would extend that rest indefinitely. They were terribly cruel instruments, these tooth traps; the broken bones and lacerated limbs of the poor dead "vermin" showed what a grim fight they had made for liberty, hanging by their torn legs, released only from their agonies when the keeper chose to make his rounds. Many a poor innocent creature suffered on these living gibbets, kestrels, owls, cuckoos—and even thrushes and smaller birds sometimes. Would that man had more sense and mercy! Were God's creatures meant to be tortured and done to death that man might preserve one or two species for his own sport? The keeper would tell you it was well they were caught, for all were alike robbers of game or eggs. All were classed as vermin; what were they to him so long as his game turned out well on the opening day, and the tips came in all right?

To us the "vermin" of the Moss were perhaps of greatest interest. First and foremost was the carrion crow, a cruel, ruthless fellow that perhaps it is no sin to destroy. Yet I like this black brigand on account of his rarity, and there are one or two nests that the keepers will not be told of by me. He is a cunning fellow, and does not often get into a trap, and he knows the sight of a gun too well to get within shot. Of all the birds of prey perhaps he is the most voracious; young grouse, leverets, mice, carrion, and garbage of all kinds suits him. He will turn vegetarian if necessary. I believe he would eat brick-bats rather than starve. Sometimes he feeds with the rooks in the fallows; but he is easily distinguished from them, for his beak is shorter and stouter, and he retains the bristly feathers round the nostrils that fall off as the rook grows, and give it the appearance of possessing white wattles.

Perhaps the fierce little merlin was the next dangerous of the flesh-eating birds. He is a lover of the wilds, and sometimes used to visit Carrington. The sparrow-hawk can do some damage, too, amongst the game. She beats the hedgerows, flying low; striking her unsuspecting victim, perhaps, as it sits singing on a twig, darting down on it with an impetuous rush that often carries her far beyond her quarry.

There is some excuse for the keeper to slay her if she has a brood of clamouring juveniles in the neighbouring fir plantation.

But why destroy the kestrel? That beautiful little red falcon, which glides so gracefully over the fields, now skimming onwards, now poising himself in the air, with swiftly vibrating wings and tail depressed, his keen eyes searching the ground below him for the unwary little field-mouse, then dropping like a stone, and rising again with the squeaking victim in his claws. He is the farmer's friend, and seldom if ever touches a young bird of any description. Mice are his staple article of diet, and it is wonderful the number he can get through in one day's foray. Yet the kestrel is most cruelly harried whenever he makes his appearance, because he is a hawk.

The cuckoo, as innocent of blood as a robin, because he has the misfortune to look like a hawk, often falls to the gun and trap. Still, the keeper may be excused his error, for even the small birds seem to think he is dangerous, and mob him most persistently. I have seen a single titlark chase a cuckoo out of sight, though perhaps it may have thought she had intentions of utilising her home, for the cuckoo is a lazy bird and puts her nursing out. She does not trouble to build a nest for herself, but deposits her egg in that of some small bird, and leaves it for her to hatch and bring up. And when the little cuckoo comes out of the egg, blind and apparently helpless, its instincts tell it that it can keep the parent birds occupied in supplying its needs alone, and straightway bracing itself against its fellow nestlings, it hitches them out of the nest. There it stays, always hungry, soon growing bigger than its foster parents, opening a cavernous mouth when they approach, almost wide enough to swallow them as well as the juicy caterpillar they are bringing. The cuckoo has, unfortunately for itself, the habit of settling on any post or bare tree and giving utterance to its familiar cry, and thus it often falls a victim to the pole trap.

The owls, too, settle on the post to rest in the evening, and are hung up next morning on the nearest tree. Poor owls, why should they suffer? The majority of keepers seem only too anxious to exterminate these best friends of the farmer. The barn and tawny owls feed almost exclusively on mice and small birds, and will even destroy beetles and other large insects. Yet the beautiful owls are entered in the black-book as vermin, and must be done to death on every possible occasion.

What an interesting bird the barn-owl is! Hiding all day in some barn or church rafters, and not turning out till it is getting dark, he is commoner among us than most people imagine. And when the noiseless shadow reels past us in the evening, most persons pass it by as an unconsidered trifle, or do not notice it at all. I say reels, for the owl has a peculiarly unsteady flight, rolling from side to side as if hopelessly inebriated. But careless as he appears, he is hard at work, straining those powerful eyes and ever-ready ears for the least sign of his prey; every now and then giving vent to a prolonged snore or shrill scream, possibly to frighten the feeding mice into movement so that he may detect their presence.

He is doing his share to keep in balance the great scheme of Nature. The flight itself is as soft and noiseless as possible; there is no swish of wings as when the lapping passes over; no clatter of stiff feathers like the wood-pigeon's bustle; no whirr of rapid wings as when we flush the grouse or partridge. The texture of his feathers is so soft and fine that the beat upon the air makes no sound, and we are startled by the suddenness with which he comes into sight and disappears again.

He is a funny fellow, too. Unlike most birds he seems to have no real fear of man, but has a very cool way of either ignoring his presence altogether, or getting out of his way with very evident gestures of displeasure at being disturbed by such an inferior creature. His attitudes of alarm or defiance are very ludicrous: spreading out his wings, lowering his head and shaking it like a bull, puffing out the feathers of his back, smacking his mandibles together, and stamping with his feet. Probably all this exhibition is intended to frighten his adversary away, for, from my experience, I gather that the owl is not very fond of fighting when it comes to the actual scratch. He shines at the "you hit me first" part of a tussle.

The barn-owl must not be confounded with the tawny or wood-owl. It is this latter that hoots, not the barn-owl, whose note is far more of a screech than a hoot. The hoot of the tawny is a beautiful sound, though many people consider it weird and horrible.

In the Lake District—on dark, still spring nights, when there was just sufficient frost to make the air feel crisp and fresh, and no light save the sheen on the water—I have listened for hours to the owls calling to each other from the distant fir-woods.

There is a wonderful stillness on such a night; the waterfall, a mile away, sounds distinctly, though in the daytime we cannot hear it; the slightest puff of wind seems to cause quite an uproar in the larches. All the birds are silent save for the occasional quack of a mallard, or a dissipated thrush that has not had time during the hours of light to get through all its singing. Then from the silence, with a startling suddenness, come three short notes and a long-drawn-out "hoo-o-o," and away over the water floats an answer to the musical challenge, and the mountains throw the echoes back till the notes die in the frosty air. In my opinion, there are few bird-notes so musical and yet so weird, or so much in harmony with the surroundings. The old-fashioned "tu-whit, tu-whit, tu-whoo" gives no idea of the sound.

There are four-legged poachers, too; perhaps one of the worst of these is our harmless necessary cat. She looks so innocent and quiet as she sits purring by the fire with her claws all in their sheaths, and her toes tucked away under her breast. There is nothing but peace and innocence written on that placid countenance; there is no guilt, no blood there.

But what makes her so sleepy all day, and why is it she would not touch her milk or cat's-meat this morning? Oh, pussy! had we seen you a few hours ago, we should have seen more of the tiger than the cat. Sneaking up behind the bushes, never sharpshooter made more use of tuft of grass or mound of earth to cover his attack. Never assassin glided over the ground more silently. Now slinking along on her stomach, her head low, ears back, every muscle twitching, every hair bristling with expectancy. Then stopping behind a clump of leaves, her head and shoulders steady, save that the under jaw is chattering with anxiety; her hind-quarters swaying rapidly to and fro, as if to work herself up for the spring. Then with a leap, like a flash she is upon a young partridge or leveret, and those savage, fierce claws are buried in the neck of the victim.

Was she hungry? Had she not had a big meal that very day, and perhaps left half of it? Had the poor little bird or beast done her an injury, that she wished to punish it? No, we must look further back for the explanation of these midnight forays. Why do cats kill rats and seldom eat the bodies? Why do they make for every fly they can? The great law of hereditary instinct has left in quiet pussy

the love of sport. All the carnivorous animals delight to kill far more than they require for food, and the cat has not lost the very English desire "to go out and kill something."

Her distant wild ancestors did most of their hunting in the night, her wild relations do now, and when she gets the chance she takes it.

I know of a barn where there are nailed up a range of tails, all telling their own tales of the reward of evil-doing. Long tails, short tails, thin tails, thick tails, black, white, yellow, tabby, all sorts and conditions of tails, from that of the poor wee kitten to that of the hoary old sinner of twelve or fifteen summers. How many a farmer's wife round has wondered "why Tom was not by the fire this morning," when perhaps Tom was making his last grim fight, tooth and nail, with the keeper's retriever—a hopeless task, as one poor lacerated leg is fast in the trap, and he cannot get fair play with the other three! Ere noon another tail is hanging on the barn, and Tom's carcass is breeding gentles for the young pheasants—providing food for those he tried to feed upon. Oh, the irony of fate!

Dogs, too, make sad poachers, but may be weaned of the habit, while a cat that once begins generally ends by deserting its home and, taking to the woods, becomes a regular Ishmaelite, till sooner or later retribution comes upon it.

Stoats and weasels are common in the country surrounding the Moss, though we never actually met with them on the moor itself. Our excursions there were principally of an entomological nature, and we used to pick up many common specimens and not a few rarities. The little striped heath moths were most abundant; the species with the finer wavy lines being much sought for.

The caterpillars of the larger moths were our principal quarry. We used to bring home our handkerchiefs full of the big hairy grub of the fox and drinker moths, only to lose them in the house, where they wandered about aimlessly, turning up weeks after in unexpected places.

Sometimes a hungry-looking grub would meander from under a fender, vainly looking for food on the carpet; or a coil of silk in the cornice showed where some poor half-starved wretch had given up its useless search, and done its best to turn into a chrysalis.

A little green caterpillar was diligently searched for—no easy task among the young

shoots of heather—and when taken home and fed up he became a gorgeous fellow indeed; bright green with two rows of brilliant golden spots. And such a big fellow, too, till all our lady acquaintances were afraid of him, and shuddered at the sight of the nasty grub. When it had at last reached about three inches in length, a change came over it, and instead of growing bigger, it became shorter and thicker, till it was small enough to spin a cocoon one-third its original length, and to turn into a pupa; in time to emerge a lovely Emperor moth, with four beautiful eyes on its wings. The cocoon of the Emperor is a very wonderful contrivance; an insignificant-looking blob on the heather, but most wonderfully constructed. It is bottle-shaped, with an opening at one end; inside the neck of this opening, a stiff array of bristles project forwards, meeting so as to close the entrance, easily pushed open by the emerging moth, but preventing any ichneumon fly or marauding ant from entering. Yet when the fly has come out, the ants sometimes use the empty cocoon as a house, building their cells inside. They are a lovely couple, the male and female, the lady much bigger than her mate, or mates I should say, but duller in colour—a very frequent rule in animal life, with the exception of the human race. There are many more males than females, consequently there is a great deal of competition; for the ladies naturally preferring the best-looking, the brightest-coloured males stand the best chance, and by the laws of sexual selection the males become more beautiful and stronger flyers. The female, not requiring to make herself look nice, remains a good plain colour; though probably protection from her many enemies may be a much more necessary agent in this matter.

Then we used to catch the little lizards and search for vipers, though we seldom found them, often, however, coming across their cast skins. The viviparous lizard was very common on bright sunny days; one we found was on the top of a stump, and one in an empty cartridge-case. Sometimes when we caught them by the tail, the owner of it would gracefully retire; and in our hands would remain a violently wriggling caudal appendage. The lizard did not seem to object nearly so much as the tail; and one which I timed moved violently for five minutes, and an hour and a quarter afterwards movement was slightly perceptible. Yet the lizard gets on well without it, and sometimes grows another, and on rare occasions two.

But Carrington Moss is gone now; grouse and curlew, twite and merlin have sought the higher moors. We must go further afield to find the viper and lizard, the Emperor moth, and small heath butterfly.

Manchester refuse has covered the cotton-grass and sundew. Locomotives whistle and labourers work where the butts were set up, and the keeper made his rounds. Smoke, grime, and filth have taken the place of the bright bloom of the heather and ling, and the sweet smell of the fresh-cut turf, and one of the most beautiful and interesting spots in Cheshire is now nothing but a name and a memory.

Since writing this article, a friend of the writer's visited the Moss, and put up a number of grouse out of a cabbage field—a striking instance of the reluctance of birds to leave their favourite haunts.

AFTER RAIN.

Clear shining after rain; the great grey seas
Sleep, scarcely ruffled by the wooing breeze,
That, heather-laden from the purple down,
Sweeps o'er the red roofs of the fishing town,
Moving the brown sails of the flitting skiffs,
Dying in the deep shadow of the cliffs.

Clear shining after rain; the August skies,
All glowing in the sunset's rosy dyes,
Lend a soft radiance from the golden west,
To spread a pathway over ocean's breast,
That heaves and murmurs, making music low,
To the still splendours of the afterglow.

So, with the shade and shine of April past,
And summer's passionate moments lulled at last,
The autumn's tranquil magic claims its hour.
The fruit, sometimes, is sweeter than the flower;
When the hot heart and eager baffled will,
In the clear shining after rain, lie still.

"ALL'S WELL."

A COMPLETE STORY. CHAPTER I.

"All's well!"

"All's well!"

The musical cry floated down from the two black figures that stood, vaguely outlined through the mist, high above the vessel's deck.

It floated down, in ever-widening ripples, round the great black hull and over the tossing waters. It was caught by the waves as they dashed from the vessel's prow, and raced past her tall sides, and foamed, and splashed, and eddied in her wake. It was caught up and thrown back, and carried on again, and swept out into the night. Out into the night, and the shrouding mist, and the rolling waste of the Atlantic. And there the ripples of its sound quivered for the last time and died away.

It floated down, already muffled by the mist, over the long, wet decks, to the ears of a man who paced to and fro in the after part of the vessel. It floated down and struck upon his ears, and vibrated in them like the ringing of a bell.

And the man turned in his restless walk and paced back again, with the cry still echoing in his ears: "All's well!"

He even repeated it to himself, softly, slowly, like one trying to reassure himself of some good news, too good to be as yet believed. He murmured it to himself with half-closed lips each time that he paused in that monotonous pacing to and fro. His footsteps fell upon the deck and beat out the rhythm of the same two words. And each time that he murmured them, each time that his listening brain caught that sound in the rushing of the wind, or the whistling of the ropes, or the steady tramp of his own footfalls, there was a smile upon his face that was not good to see.

His fellow passengers on board the ship knew him as the Silent Man. No doubt he had some other name; no doubt the Captain knew it, and the ship's books held it written down in full; but to all the passengers who knew him he was known only as the Silent Man. And there were few on board who knew him not; few who had not noticed the tall, gaunt figure that strode incessantly to and fro and up and down upon the deck; few who had not shrunk insensibly from that haggard face, and the lips that murmured for ever to themselves, but could hardly be brought to frame an answer to another; few who had not wondered who this man was, with his murmuring lips and his taciturnity, and his ceaseless tramp on the ship's deck—who had not speculated on the business that brought him on that voyage of the "Amsterdam" across the broad Atlantic.

Once more the bell sounded, and the voices rang out through the darkness. And the Silent Man still paced, with bowed head and folded arms, up and down, to and fro in the gathering mist.

Once again the bell was almost due to sound—but the cry that broke then from one of the two motionless figures on the look-out bridge was not the same. A cry of sudden fear, of wild alarm—with waving arms and frantic gestures, and hands pointing out into the darkness. Pointing into the darkness no longer now; pointing at something vast and shapeless, like a cloud rising from the water. Something that came swiftly, noiselessly, looming

out of the fog, ever nearer and nearer, towering high above the vessel's masts, lit with a strange glimmering light. Something that a moment later, with a noise of crackling ice; with a horrible, rending, grinding jar; with a blow that made the great ship quiver like a compass-needle; crashed into the bows of the "Amsterdam."

For an instant she remained reared up against the iceberg, held fast in the jagged cleft that her prow had cut—then slowly, with a rushing swirl of water, slid back into the waves.

She was sinking in mid-Atlantic!

One of the first boats that was launched contained the Silent Man. He had taken his place quietly, almost mechanically. He was rowing now; and the beat of his oar in the rowlock seemed to him, as he gazed back at the misty outline of the sinking ship, to be still grimly, darkly, ominously echoing those words: "All's well!"

All that night they rowed, menaced incessantly by masses of detached ice, by floating wreckage, by foam-topped surf that broke over the open boat. All that night, and the next day, and for many days after.

Who can tell the horror of those days?

Of days when the shrouding mist robbed them of all hope of rescue; when the sun beat down through the damp-laden atmosphere for hour after hour on their uncovered heads; when no cloud in the sky came to screen them for an instant from its scorching, dazzling rays; when they drifted they knew scarcely whither, and heard afar off the fog-signals of vessels that passed them unheeded in the mist; when arms ached, and strength was failing, and hunger and thirst were doing their fell work, and courage and hope together were well nigh spent.

Of nights when the rising breeze blew through their saturated clothes and chilled the very life within them; when other boats, the companions of their fate, were missed and lost sight of; when the great rolling swell threatened in the darkness to overwhelm them, and each giant wave, as it passed, seemed only to delay the death that the next must surely bring; when the misery, and anguish, and despair were made deeper, and blacker, and more intolerable by the darkness.

Of days and nights later on, when the heat, and thirst, and weakness had done their work, and men began to rave, and sing aloud, and say wild, unmeaning things; when fever and death came amongst them;

when it was no longer a strange sight to see dead men—their bodies stripped, that their clothing might afford protection to the living—cast over into the grey waves without a prayer, almost without a thought; when the number of the living souls on board that little boat shrank awfully from day to day.

When there were at last but six alive—but five—and then, one dim, grey morning, only three!

The Silent Man still lived. Through all those days he lived—silent, unmoved, uncomplaining, working at his oar like a tireless machine, possessed, as it were, with a very greed for life. Through all those days he lived—untouched by hunger or thirst, by heat or chill, by fatigue, or exposure, or despair. Through all those days—unheeding everything around him, living in a sort of dream.

He had dreamt the same waking dream that night when he paced to and fro on the deck of the "Amsterdam." He had dreamt the same dream, but not quite all of it; had seen the same dream-figures, sleeping and waking, for twelve months past; but now—in his weakness and the horror of his daily life, with madness, and delirium, and death all around him—the dream-figures gathered colour, and vividness, and substantiality; they became to his disordered brain as living comrades, living and moving with him in a different world.

The scenes of the vision always recurred in the same order.

A cottage lying at the end of a long, shaded garden. The sun shining on the red-tiled roof, and the white muslin curtains in the little windows, and the rustic porch of trellis-work, on which a rose-tree climbs stragglingly. The garden, bright with flowering lilac, and drooping arbours of laburnum, and all the uncultured profusion of English country flowers. The air around filled with the fragrance of the blossoms and the spring-song of countless birds. And over all a sense of brightness, and happiness, and home.

A little two-year-old child, toddling with open arms and laughing eyes down the gravel path.

A fair-haired young mother, that runs and catches up the little girl, and bears her with merry laughter, held aloft in her arms, down the path to meet the dreaming man.

A moment of exquisite happiness, of mutual love, of joy so boundless that it seems to fill the soul, and brim over. A time of happy rest, of unimpaired content,

when those two sit in the rose-twined porch, with the child playing at their feet, and watch the sun as he sinks to his rest.

A shadow that falls like a knife between the dreaming man and his wife.

A shadow, at first thin and grey, that seems, for all it is so slight, to rob the sunshine suddenly of all its warmth and brightness, and leave the evening cold and cheerless. A shadow that grows quickly broader, and blacker, and icier, until it blots out the figures of the wife and child, and darkens the little porch; that steals up swiftly, like a cloud of deadly vapour, round the red tiles of the cottage roof, and wraps all the picture at last in an impenetrable shroud.

A shadow that somehow gathers itself gradually into the form of a man's face—coarse, thick-lipped, sensuous, with gloating eyes and a false smile. A face that might, for all its coarseness, be made attractive by that luring smile, yet in itself cruel, and dissolute, and evil-looking.

Slowly the face emerges from behind that shadowy curtain. Slowly the features come dimly forth, as one by one they recur to the tortured mind of the man in his waking dream. Slowly the eyes of the dream-face turn and gaze down upon him mockingly.

Then a great surge of blood-red light floods over the gibing face, and hides it from view, and there is only the grey shadow left.

So far, the vision had always been the same; but lately, since the Silent Man had taken his passage on board the "Amsterdam," there had been something more which followed it—another ending to the never-ending dream.

An ending in which he sees a scrap of paper, traced over with trembling characters. A letter dated four weeks before from number twenty-six, Omaha Avenue, Lumberville, U.S.A.

The characters range themselves unerringly before his mind:

"I have sinned, and God knows I have repented. I do not ask to be forgiven. That cannot be. But for our child's sake, for little Goldie's sake, come quickly. She who was once
"YOUR WIFE."

The Silent Man's hand steals into the breast of his coat, and touches something there—something hard and cold, made of metal; something that he touches softly and caressingly, looking at his fingers after-

wards, to make sure that the sea-water has not reached it; something that in the darkness of the night, as he lies crouching in the bows of the tossing boat, he takes from his breast and examines and weighs in his hand.

And he listens to the washing of the waves as they splash on the boat's side, and laughs softly to himself as they, too, seem to bear the same message—"All's well!"

All was yet well—for what he had to do.

The morning dawned at last, when there were but two living souls besides himself on board the boat—dawned with a glorious uprising of the sun, to show that the deathly fog had rolled away, that all was clear as far as the horizon-line, that a sailing-ship was standing down towards them.

They were saved!

Who shall say what those men felt? Who shall describe the weeping and laughter intermixed, the incoherent cries of joy, the frantic waving of the emaciated arms, the wild ejaculations of confused thanksgiving and imprecation that burst from their blackened lips? Who shall wonder that, but for their failing strength, they would have cast themselves into the waves, and struggled to gain the boat that was lowered to rescue them; that in the moment of their preservation from a death but few hours distant their minds became distraught?

All save the Silent Man.

He alone was calm. To him alone their rescue seemed not unexpected. To him alone it was not a miracle like to the raising from the dead. To him alone it was but the fulfilment of an omen.

The sailing-ship that picked them up was bound for Rio; but the Silent Man was destined to dream that strange dream many a time yet before land was reached. For several weeks they beat about on the Atlantic. They were delayed by headwinds, thrown out of their course by constantly recurring gales, becalmed for three whole days on the equator. It was close upon two months from that glorious dawn when the little boat had been espied drifting on the waste of tossing waters, that they first saw the coast of Brazil—like a streak of bluish cloud rising behind the sea-line—opening out before them.

Their voyage was nearly at an end.

The bluish cloud resolved itself into dark-green masses of vegetation growing down to the water's edge; the vegetation became dotted and broken by the white roofs of buildings; the buildings collected

themselves together, tier beyond tier, and blocked out the vegetation; a great concourse of masts and spars rose before the buildings: they were entering Rio Harbour.

It was long yet before the Silent Man resumed his journey. There were enquiries to be made—enquiries wherein the object of that journey was sought for, but not revealed; the story of the loss of the "Amsterdam," and of the awful days that followed it, had to be told and told again; a sum of money was raised and paid to him.

At last he was embarked for New York.

Then followed more days of dazzling heat, and glittering water, and the rising and falling of the ship's deck; days in which he lay inactive, watching the feathery clouds that floated across the sky, tracing the ship's wake as it wound over the glassy surface of the sea; nights in which he saw again the chill shadow creep up the cottage wall, and the face fashion itself out of the shadow, and the flash of blood that ended it all. And then his hand would seek the thing that he carried in his breast, and he would look at it stealthily in the moonlight and laugh exultingly to himself.

Once more he was on land, in the crowded streets of New York. He wanted to get to Lumberville; it is a long distance, almost half-way across the continent. But he had got plenty of time to do that which he had come to do.

His money would not suffice to carry him the whole way. For two days he travelled by the railroad, fancying in the motion of the cars that he was still at sea; expecting almost, as he looked from the windows of the car, to see the leaden-coloured waves, and the grey mist, and the tangles of floating sea-weed. Then his money was gone, and he must walk.

Rough, loosely-made roads, thick with sand and grit. Long day's tramps under the broiling sun, when the little hillock or the stunted tree, that looked so close at hand across the unbroken level of the prairie, was only reached after half an hour's weary walking. Starlit nights, when he cast himself down on the long, coarse grass, to sleep the deathlike sleep of exhaustion, to dream once more that never-changing dream. Homesteads of hewn timber, where he was made welcome in a rough, yet kindly fashion, where he was allowed to sleep, perhaps, on a bed of straw in the empty barn, where round-eyed children brought him milk and hunches of bread, and stayed behind to

stare at the silent, uncouth man. Cities of six months' growth, proud in their uprising buildings, which never would be finished, and their mighty streets, which never would be built. Cities in which he was received with cold suspicion, as another competitor in that struggling throng of hungered humanity, whence he was watched on his departure with unconcealed relief.

More homesteads, more aspiring cities, more of the rolling boundlessness of the prairies.

And then—Lumberville.

CHAPTER II.

It was half-past three in the afternoon when the limping figure—his clothes torn and grimed with dust, his face and hands scorched and seamed and blackened by exposure—slouched up under the shade of the eucalyptus-trees that skirted Omaha Avenue.

His right hand was hidden in his breast. His hungry, bloodshot eyes scanned the houses furtively as he passed.

Number twenty-six.

The man faltered. His hand trembled—even twitched once or twice convulsively—beneath his coat. His eyes turned—involuntarily, as it were—towards the house, and met the eyes of a woman who was sitting in the porch.

A middle-aged woman with a pleasant, comely face, who lay back in her chair, fanning herself and rocking gently to and fro in the shadow of the verandah. As the eyes of the Silent Man met hers, in a vacant, wild-looking stare, she ceased rocking and smiled, but not unkindly.

"Well, you're a pretty figure, anyhow," she said.

There was a pause. The Silent Man still looked at her. His hand still fumbled beneath his coat.

"Seems to me as you've been doin' a bit of walking," continued the woman, still smiling. "And by 'ppearances, it's been pretty rough. Are ye hungry?" she enquired suddenly with a jerk.

The Silent Man said nothing. The woman recommenced her rocking, and went on talking in her quiet, even voice:

"If so be, I s'pose I could give ye a bite and a drop of ice water, and not hurt myself."

The man wetted his lips with his tongue and spoke all at once, hoarsely, in a curious, gabbling whisper.

"Is there a man living here—Spencer?" he said.

The woman looked at him keenly.

"What has that got to do with you, anyhow! Are ye a friend of Mr. Spencer's?"

He started, and a sudden light came into his filmy, bloodshot eyes.

"Then he does live here? I am—a friend of his."

What is that hand doing that works nervously to and fro beneath his coat? That seems to be clutching something in its grasp, yet never comes from his breast?

The woman does not see it. She is looking across the road at a patch of golden sunflowers that grow in a hedge opposite. When she turns again to the Silent Man the hand is still.

"Well, Mr. Spencer don't live here now, so you're just wrong," she answered with some asperity, rocking herself a trifle more energetically. "And not much loss, either. And if you're a friend of his, I don't envy you, not much. A man who could go and leave his wife—or who was a wife to him, anyway, whatever she was—with a sick child and nary a dollar in the house, leave her and go clean off, he's what I'd call a skunk. See there!"

The man had to moisten his lips again before he could speak.

"And she?" he muttered.

"She? D'ye mean Mrs. Spencer? Well, she's dead, poor soul."

"Dead!"

He would have fallen but for the stem of the eucalyptus-tree. He leant against it shivering. His eyes gazed dreamily at the sunshine in the road—at the sunshine and the clump of nodding sunflowers, and the white pinafore of a little girl who was playing round their tall stalks. He even followed with his eyes the flight of a scarlet butterfly, as it fluttered quivering from flower to flower. It seemed as if his brain were numbed and unable to think. Try as he would, he could not think.

The woman looked at him compassionately.

"I'm sorry if I've skeered you," she said more gently. "I just didn't know as you were acquainted with Mrs. Spencer, or I wouldn't have bluffed it out like that. But it's the truth, anyway; so it 'ud have had to come out all the same, one word or one thousand. Maybe ye'd like a drink of ice water," she added quickly, as she rose from her chair.

The man motioned to her with his hand. It had fallen from his breast now.

"No, no," he whispered. "Tell me—how it was."

The thoughts were coming back to him now—black, evil thoughts, that he shuddered vaguely to remember; thoughts of what he had come there for; thoughts of how it had all ended with that woman's word, "Dead!"

"You'd best have something, for you do look real bad," the woman persisted.

"But, there, if you won't, I s'pose you won't. Well," she continued, settling herself once more in the chair and folding her ample arms, "I've said this yer Mr. Spencer was a skunk, and a skunk he was to her! And she was frit of him, downright frit—couldn't abear of him, far's I could see, and yet daren't speak to him hardly, she was that frit. Well, sir, I told you that they had a child"—she was getting loquacious now, in her placid, droning manner, and rocking herself with a steady swing that seemed to stimulate her conversation—"anyway, there was a child with them, though I never could understand exactly whose 'twas, and he was more of a skunk to that child than it's in the natur of man to be to his own, and the child was took sick with the diphthery. That was when he bolted. Sick as sick the child was, poor little mortal! And then Mrs. Spencer come out—come out pretty strong, too. I hadn't had much of a notion of her while the man was with her—I don' mind confessin'—with her dolly face and fool ways and no more spirt than a chipmunk, but when she come out as she did come out, I kinder changed my ideas of her. Yes, sir! The way she nursed that child, and sat up with her, day and night, and Sundays and work days, and never took no food, so's she could buy medicines for the child, and got sick herself, and didn't care, but went on nursin' just the same—well, it was pretty strong! And I—you'd just as well change your mind and have something," the woman interposed earnestly, "you're lookin' that skeered."

The man shook his head irritably.

"Go on."

"Well, there ain't much more to tell. She took the diphthery then, as I said, and took it bad. And there was no one to nurse her—'cept what I did, and that wasn't much—and she'd sorter taken the grit out of herself with all the nursin' and watchin' and starvin' herself, and she couldn't seem ter stand out against it. And so—she died. That's all."

There was a long pause. The woman was very quiet. There was a gleam in her eyes, as she looked away across the sunny fields,

as though tears were standing there. The man still leant against the stem of the eucalyptus-tree, twisting in his hands a fallen leaf that he had caught as it fluttered down.

"And the child?" he said at last. "Did she die?"

"No, sir!" the woman answered, still very quietly, "she didn't die. I guess the nursin' saved her. When she come round," she continued presently, "there was no one left to take care of her, if you understand; so me and my husband, considerin' the lonesomeness of the poor little critter, kinder 'dopted her, not having any children our own. And she's settled down with us just wonderful. It's real good to have her. Goldie," she cried, "come here, dearie!"

The man turned quickly, shaking with a strange spasmodic tremor.

"Goldie!" she called again softly—"Goldie!"

The little girl who was playing in the hedge by the patch of sunflowers rose and turned towards them. For an instant she hesitated, shyly, wonderingly; then suddenly she stretched out her little arms and began to run across the road.

"Daddy!" she cried.

The last tinge of golden light was fading from the crests of the waves. The last faint flush of the sunset was fading from the western sky. A tall, grizzled man, and a golden-haired girl, ripening into womanhood, were standing on the hurricane-deck of the ocean steamer, watching the flush as it paled and died away.

He was a rich man from out West, everybody knew. Had been mayor of Lumberville, some said, and had made a great fortune in live stock and grain. A self-made man, who had risen from nothing, but deserved his success by straightforwardness and hard work. And the girl was his daughter.

The flush faded from the violet summer sky. The stars came out, one by one, shining brightly in its clear depths. The man and girl turned from where they stood in the vessel's stern, and began to walk slowly back—in the direction where the sun, when it rose on the morrow morn, would rise on the rocky headlands and rugged cliffs that the man had last seen from the deck of the "Amsterdam," as they faded into the blueness of the sky, close on fourteen years before.

And as they turned, the clear voices rang out once more over the silent waters:

"All's well!"

"All's well!"

BEWITCHED.

A STORY IN EIGHT PARTS.

PART II.

"My dear Alice, do you see? There's your lover off with Miss Boyd already, and you in that disgraceful dress. I knew how it would be."

"It is nothing of the sort," cried Alice, coming out of her bewilderment. "She is going to sit to him."

"Oh!—another model!" A significant drawing together of lips between the words that said far more than many sentences.

"Don't be so tiresome, aunt," the girl said impatiently. "He has only gone to the gate with her. He couldn't well let her go alone. But I will change my dress before he is back. Tell him I shan't be a minute," and she ran to her room.

She accomplished the change in ten minutes, and came back breathless into the drawing-room, dainty and fresh in a green frock that Arthur admired immensely, her cheeks flushed beyond their normal healthy pink by hurry. But though it could not have taken three minutes to walk to and open the gate, bow out Miss Boyd and return, the drawing-room was empty save of Miss Downing.

"I suppose Arthur is in the garden," said Alice impatiently. It was too bad of her aunt to obstruct them by holding the drawing-room.

"No, he is not. He has gone to the Rectory to lunch."

"He cannot. He wasn't asked. He never said good-bye," said Alice, confounded.

"He must be asked by now," said Aunt Robina, "for the gong sounded just as Mrs. Waterton came out upon their lawn to meet them, and she couldn't help asking him to stay, with the gong in their ears, and I suppose the smell of lunch in their noses. Anyway, he went in. I saw them the whole way."

Alice forced a smile. "He is so eager about his picture, he wants to lose no time. Miss Boyd imagined she was required for a whole picture, but he just wanted to sketch some little thing that struck him as useful. It was really very obliging of her. He may have to stay for tea, too."

This was her way of discomfiting fate by being prepared for its worst. She did not in the least expect that Arthur would stay to tea at the Rectory. He had promised to walk with her to Holywell Mill that

afternoon. If he had forgotten it in the imperious necessities of art, he would remember as soon as his small business at the Rectory was finished. She would be ready for him, but ready also for her aunt's sneers in case he should prove recreant.

Miss Downing might feel it to be at once her duty and her pleasure to snub her niece and embitter her innocent happiness and confidence, but she would have been as angry in her way as Alice herself if any real danger to the future were to present itself. "That woman looks a regular bad lot," she said. "I cannot understand the Watertons having her in their house. She is well-dressed and all that, but I don't like her eyes." ("Arthur does," thought Alice.) "She looks up to any villainy. I must ask Mrs. Waterton where she picked her up. I don't care to have her here while you are at home, a woman one knows nothing about. Not that she can do you much harm in three weeks."

"No, she can't do much harm in three weeks," said Alice distinctly, half to herself. "To be sure, you seemed to think there was little chance of my being married in three weeks."

"Heaven forbid you shouldn't," cried Miss Downing; "and my grey silk just home from Boazman's. You don't think, Alice—but I'll go over to Mrs. Waterton's, and ask her—"

"Ask her what?" interrupted Alice, with burning cheeks and fierce eyes. "Don't be so absurd, aunt. What can Mrs. Waterton know about it?"

"I suppose she knows who Miss Boyd is."

"But what can Miss Boyd possibly have to do with my wedding being put off?" the girl demanded, in passionate fear. "It is all nonsense. You began it yourself, prophesying evil, and I was repeating it for a joke. It is quite a joke—quite. How can it be anything else? Why do you make such a fuss about Arthur speaking to a perfect stranger, and walking across to the Rectory with her? And what on earth has it to do with your grey silk dress? You will be able to exhibit it at the Stranges' on Thursday week."

"As if I should think of wearing it before your wedding! And I suppose you will go in that old pink thing, and Miss Boyd will appear in something splendid, and cut you out again."

"No doubt," said Alice, shrugging her shoulders. "It can't be helped. I have nothing else."

"In my time girls kept away from balls

altogether so close upon their marriage. It wasn't considered nice to appear in public under such circumstances. Besides, it wasn't worth while."

"I'm glad I was not born in your time," returned Alice. "I want to get all the fun I can out of life before I am a married woman. It is always quite worth my while to dance with Arthur. I have only danced with him once in all my life—at one ball, I mean: when I met him. If the pink isn't decent enough, I can wear one of my new dresses."

"One of your trousseau dresses? You cannot! It would be most unlucky."

"I don't believe in bad luck. I will wear the white muslin just to show my disbelief; and then you'd better wear your grey, for, of course, wearing my white will put off the wedding for altogether, so you need not hoard it up."

"You are a silly girl, Alice," said Miss Downing mechanically.

She was busy pondering how to extract from Mrs. Waterton all possible information concerning Miss Boyd, then to look back at such information as had been already given, and examine it. It was only two days since Mrs. Waterton had said she expected a visitor. "Lydia Boyd, the daughter of an old friend of Henry's, from India, but now living in Curzon Street, Mayfair, such a very good address—suggestive of lacs of rupees. Henry wonders how she does it, for George Boyd held a very small Civil Service appointment, and his wife—he could not remember whom he had married, but she, perhaps, had money. We had not heard she was in England till she asked if she might come to see us." Then an aside that morning: "Very clever, though she doesn't look it. Heaps of money. Jane unpacked her things, and says they are fit for a duchess: silver-backed brushes, silk underclothing, all her gowns from Redfern and Kate Reilly. Dick Freeland dined with us last night, and called her a most fascinating person. She was in black lace, and simply blazed with diamonds. I can't see it myself. I suppose she is a gentleman's beauty."

"Mr. Freeland probably scented the silver-backed brushes and lacs of rupees," said Miss Downing stiffly, resenting such disloyalty to Alice, for whom he ought to be decked in willow. Perhaps Arthur had heard of those treasures now. They were all alike, all eager for money. Miss Downing was convinced that the smallness of Alice's dowry was to be blamed for the loss of Dick Freeland.

Miss Downing and Alice lunched alone. That over, the question was how to act so that, should Arthur not turn up in time for the walk, she should lose no dignity by having waited in vain. It was next to certain that he would not turn up. He was sure to take the sitting he had asked for, or why had he gone into the house? He would then return to his picture. So Alice said:

"If Arthur should finish his picture sooner than he expects, please tell him I shall be back in time for tea. I will go to see Violet Sandys, as I have this afternoon free, and that will save to-morrow."

Violet Sandys lived quite two miles away. She was at home, and very pleased to see Alice; very much interested in her approaching wedding and the preparations and plans. She was a very practical person indeed; the subjects of trousseau and tour had not half the charms for her that were provided by servants and furniture, that special branch of furniture which is the feature of to-day—the numerous inventions for the saving of trouble and space. Violet had them all at her finger-ends. According to her, Alice might dispense with servants altogether, and have her house cleaned and her food cooked solely by pulling electric buttons and putting pennies in slots.

"I do so envy you living in a dear little flat," she said. "It is no use attempting all those delightful things here. The servants won't have them, and mamma will have the servants. It is absurd nowadays, when we are all so poor, to live in a place like this," looking disparagingly round at the big Tudor house and its wide parks and gardens. "It is my dream to live in a flat," she went on, "where one can get at everything one wants without moving out of one's chair."

It cheered Alice up immensely to talk of pots and pans, carpets and carpet-sweepers. It made marriage seem such a real thing, far too substantial and 'oo near to vanish at the glance of a pair of hateful grey eyes. She almost ran home—she was so afraid of keeping Arthur waiting, of losing one moment of his dear society.

It was a shock to hear he had not come, but she would not be silly and fanciful. Of course, now he had found the missing ingredient for his picture, he would work at it with redoubled vigour and get it finished all the sooner.

At seven o'clock Alice said: "He will not come now till after dinner." She and her aunt had their usual small repast, and

then Alice awaited her lover in the drawing-room with tea and cakes.

He came at eight, but he had not dined. He looked pale and worn, and was rather absent, as he was given to being after some hours' hard work, buried in his picture. For nearly two hours there had been no light for painting, yet he had had no time to dine, he said. Alice gave him tea. He protested at first; then took the proffered cup. The hot stimulant cleared his brain and he fell upon the cakes ravenously.

"Is Kilmeny finished?" asked Alice.

"Kilmeny!" For a moment he looked as if he had never heard of such a person. "No, of course not. I have had no time to go near it. I have been too busy."

"Busy, doing what?" suspiciously.

"Making sketches; sketches for great pictures, really great ones. Pictures that will mean fame—glory. Why can't one go on working, working, till the work is finished?—but night comes when no man can work."

He talked very strangely. Alice was not a person naturally given to fearfulness, and she flouted superstition as she would have flouted jealousy yesterday, but her flesh crept as she listened. Was Arthur going out of his mind from overwork?

She came to his side and put her arm round him, as if she would thus bring his mind back to realities and substance.

"You work too much, dear," she said in her calm, steady voice. "You need far more rest than you take. Come and look through these lists with me. I have been seeing Violet Sandys this afternoon, and she showed me some circulars they had just had from Maple. There is a dear little cupboard, only sixteen-and-six—"

He looked down at her absently for a moment, then admiringly, then most tenderly. She looked very fair and sweet in her light-blue evening dress, her soft brown hair and her pretty neck and arms all shining in the lamplight below the shade as she bent over the furniture lists. "You are a dear girl," he whispered fondly, and did his best to attend to qualities and prices; and Alice's heart beat joyously, for it was not now any alien attraction which struggled with his attention, but the superior delights of making love to her.

When he left at half past ten, according to Miss Downing's rigorous canon of propriety, she asked him—not because of any doubt, but lest she should wake up in the early morning and be miserable: troubles and doubts always look so big

and black in those chilly, hungry little hours before tea comes in to cheer—"How did you like Miss Boyd on farther acquaintance?"

The hall was very brightly lighted. The slightest flush or change of countenance must have been discernible to those searching eyes. He did not flinch in the least. His eyes did not swerve ever so slightly from looking into hers.

"Miss Boyd? The Watertons' visitor?" he answered, neither hesitatingly nor too readily. "I didn't like her particularly. She is very plain, and not very pleasant, and she has very little to say for herself. Are you much interested in her?"

"But you asked her to sit to you?"

"Yes, only for the eyes. She has a queer look in them, as if she were a person who 'saw things,' as they say of creepy people whom ghosts visit. It struck me as the very thing I wanted for Kilmeny's eyes; what is missing in your sweet, innocent ones," kissing them each in turn.

"And have you painted it into my face? How shall I look with Miss Boyd's eyes? Am I improved?"

"Sweet, you must learn to efface yourself in the cause of art. The face will be neither your face nor Miss Boyd's, but Kilmeny's. The eyes will make all the difference. I did not want to paint a pretty girl who had never known anything but what was good and pure."

"Would you mind letting me see?"

He drew a sketch-book from his pocket and turned over the leaves. He looked puzzled; then uneasy. Then he hastily attempted to pull the book back in his pocket, but Alice snatched at it and opened it; watched enquiringly, but unchecked.

It was full of strange figures, more or less complete; some draped, some costumed, some mere hasty confusions of lines, but all had the same face unmistakably suggested—Lydia Boyd's.

She gave the book back to him with an unnatural little laugh.

"You have been very industrious, and Miss Boyd has been very obliging. Did you make all these studies from reality or from memory?"

"I forget; partly one and partly the other, I think. I had no idea I had made so many. She struck me as an excellent type for several subjects."

"She ought to be flattered."

"Well, I don't know. I am afraid she may think I have taken rather a liberty if she ever recognises herself, but of course she won't, for somebody else will have to sit

for the rest of the pictures. However villainous one's subject, she must be beautiful to please the public who buys."

"Do you think Miss Boyd is villainous?" Alice asked, startled.

"Oh! good gracious, no! I hope I implied nothing of the sort. She only struck me, I suppose," glancing through the narrow pages, "as a possible Circe—or Lucrezia Borgia—or old witch—with a considerable amount of beauty worked in."

Pyncholk was a very quiet place compared with London and Simla, but Mrs. Waterton exerted herself strenuously to entertain her guest with such material as was within reach. The Rector's means did not admit of any brilliance, but as it happened, they were giving a dinner-party that very night. It had been arranged a fortnight ago, before Miss Boyd appeared on the scene, even as represented by her letter of introduction, but Mrs. Waterton had fixed the date of her arrival so as to take in that unwonted chance of festivity. The guests were six elderly and dignified persons, exclusive of a curate thrown in to balance Miss Boyd. On the next evening but one, there was one of those small and early evenings beloved still in some old-fashioned country neighbourhoods, where the entertainment consists of high tea, games, and "trays"; specially convenient for the eating-up of the baked meats of a more stately dinner. To bid Miss Downing and Alice to this feast had been Miss Waterton's early errand two days before. Arthur Knollys, too, was bidden, as was seemly, to accompany his betrothed.

Arthur excused himself from tea on plea of work, but promised to turn up later. Mrs. Waterton loudly lamented his absence. They were such a dull set of people; a London man brought so much life to such parties. He would have known all sorts of new games and other devices for making the evening go off well. She was afraid Miss Boyd was tired of cards.

The curate, Mr. Lee, who was of course of the party—where men are scarce they are compelled to play many parts—resented this imputation upon the resources of Pyncholk. Miss Boyd must not suppose that their games were not up to date. They could turn tables, raise spirits, tell fortunes by palmistry and characters by many divers methods, at Pyncholk as elsewhere. He proposed they should hide a pin, or set somebody to guess the number of a five-pound note—Miss Boyd could do that, he was positive.

Miss Boyd, to Mrs. Waterton's surprise, looked startled and annoyed.

"I can do nothing of the sort," she answered brusquely. "Such games are the stupidest things in the world."

"Yet you must have seen very strange things in India," said the curate, anxious in his turn to display his extensive and profound reading.

"Not so strange, perhaps, as they seem," she answered impatiently. "I hope you don't mean to put drawing-room telepathy on a plane with Indian juggling?"

"If you do," said Dick Freeland drily, "I should hardly think it a proper amusement for good Christian folks, to say nothing of parsons."

"It is mere skill, like whist or chess," said Mr. Lee. "There is nothing occult in it. When it isn't skill it is fraud."

"Then you didn't mean to play fair?" said Dick.

"Mr. Lee means to show us his skill," said Miss Boyd, who was certainly out of temper. She was dressed in grey, and looked plainer than usual, but she wore handsome opals on a band round her throat, and looked as usual like a very rich woman, and a stately one.

Mr. Lee was put on his mettle at once, impelled by even a stronger force than vanity. Was he not an unmarried curate and Miss Boyd a rich woman? He wished to stand well with her.

"Let me bandage your eyes," he begged, "and I will undertake to make you do in ten minutes whatever Mr. Freeland and Miss & Court choose."

She submitted with a scornful smile. Dick and Alice bent their heads over a strip of paper, pencilled it, and handed it to Mr. Lee.

"To creep along the piano top," he read, and nodded approvingly.

He placed his finger-tips on the back of Miss Boyd's neck, and there was a breathless pause. She did not move. The curate waited patiently, then suddenly dropped his hands and muttered: "It is no use with such a subject." He was very pale indeed.

"You've soon given in," scoffed Dick Freeland.

"Try me," said Arthur Knollys, who had come in quietly while Miss Boyd was being bandaged.

"No, don't, Arthur," cried Alice, with an uncalled-for amount of apprehension, seeing how Mr. Lee's occult powers had just been discredited. Miss Boyd's parted lips

betrayed intent attention, though she could not see that Arthur was withdrawing his offer in a reassuring glance at Alice.

"Yes, do," she said. "Let us give Mr. Lee a chance."

She undid her bandage, and handed it to him. He put it round his own eyes at once. But it was Mr. Lee who drew back now.

"It's all rubbish," he said, "I will have nothing to do with it; and I have a sick call to make."

"The charlatan exposed," said Dick rudely, as Mr. Lee hurriedly bade adieu to his hostess.

He heard perfectly well; indeed, Dick had no intention of concealing what was really a joke. He only smiled a sickly smile and took his departure, leaving his reputation as a thaumaturgist dead for ever behind him.

"Who would have thought the little chap was so sensitive on the subject?" said Dick contritely.

"How could you vex him so, Dick?" asked Alice reproachfully. "He never said good bye to me."

"Or to me, for that matter," said another girl. "He looked so awfully ashamed of himself."

"Please knot this thing for me, somebody," said Arthur, fumbling with the bandage. "Come, isn't anybody going to perform on me? I'm a first-rate subject, they tell me."

"You 'will' him to do something, Alice," said Mrs. Waterton.

Miss Boyd, who was nearest, knotted the handkerchief ends behind his head. Alice was hurt. She had asked him "not to play," and he had chosen to obey Miss Boyd's wish in preference.

"I cannot," she said. "I don't believe in it. Mr. Lee couldn't do it."

"Because he was resisted by a stronger intelligence," said Arthur thoughtfully, in a very low voice.

Miss Boyd snatched the bandage she had just tied from Arthur's eyes.

"Why did you say that?" she asked, with astonishing asperity.

"Say what?" asked Arthur, looking bewildered. "Did I speak aloud? I beg your pardon if I complained. You did pull a little tight."

"Well, it is a very stupid and disagreeable amusement," said Mrs. Waterton. "It doesn't seem to amuse anybody—quite the reverse—so I propose we make up a rubber, and the young people sit down to a round game."

Miss Boyd joined the Rector and his wife with Miss Downing at the former diversion, and the rest set to work shuffling cards and dividing counters.

"Is she cross, then?" Arthur whispered to Alice as they bent their heads together over the heap of red and white ivory. "Is it because I was so late? Really and truly I could come no sooner."

"Why did you say that B. woman"—the expression was only used to guard against ears peculiarly sensitive to the suppressed surname—"was so intelligent when it was all her stupidity?"

"I didn't say it, she said it," said Arthur.

"Why, I heard you!" cried Alice disdainfully.

"You must have heard her. I heard her close behind me as she fumbled at my head. I never spoke; if I did I couldn't have said that. She is as dense as a log."

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